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ABSTRACT

Teachers, principals, and supervisors need to study, analyze, and appraise relevant issues in the social studies curriculum. This paper identifies different issues that can be considered in social studies, and points out the reasons for and against utilizing the different instructional materials, teaching methods, educational objectives, and curriculum decisions. The first issue discussed is the use of textbooks as the primary instructional material. Advantages of using texts include the time writers have spent selecting the content, the convenience of using a prepared teachers manual, and an adequately controlled vocabulary. Other issues include using content from the structure of knowledge, inductive versus deductive teaching, using affective objectives, using workbooks, and using programmed materials. Using criterion referenced tests is discussed as an issue. It is suggested as an unbiased approach to evaluate learner progress, but may not measure relevant learning such as developing significant attitudes. The suggestion is made that processes are more complex to measure in terms of learner achievement than are final products. Processes in teaching-learning situations include critical thinking, valuing, problem solving, decision making, hypothesizing, and research. Selecting objectives can be an issue in that there is disagreement over who is best suited to select learning objectives and the means of learning: pupils, teachers, or the state. Additional issues discussed are career education, emphasis on the basics, and learning centers in the classroom. Ultimately, based on knowledge, selected trends in the social studies curriculum need implementation. (DK)

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Issues in the Social Studies Curriculum

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ISSUES IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

There are selected issues which teachers, principals, and supervisors need to identify, examine, evaluate, and ultimately attempt to develop a related synthesis. Which issues may be important for reflection by educators in the public school setting?

Using Textbooks as an Issue

There are teachers in the class setting who make heavy use of textbooks in the social studies curriculum. Thus, pupils largely develop learnings from reading content contained in textbooks. These teachers may even use good teaching methods to have pupils experience interest, purpose, and meaning in learning. There may be a few other learning experiences for pupils such as the use of filmstrips, films, and pictures from a teacher's own file. However, the scope of content and sequence of units of studies is determined from the confines of a selected series of textbooks.

Reasons given for the heavy use of textbooks in the social studies curriculum may include the following:

1. The writers of these texbooks have spent considerable time in selecting relevant content.
2. Preparation for teaching is easier when the teacher's manual is used much in preparing for teaching-learning situations.
3. Unit titles and sequence of units have been carefully determined by writers of these textbooks.
4. An adequately controlled vocabulary is in evidence since a few new words are added sequentially in each page of content.
5. Colorful illustrations related to the printed content of each page assist pupils in attaining meaningful learnings.

Bruner[1] wrote:

> Mastery of the fundamental ideas of a field involves not only the grasping of general principles, but also the development of an attitude toward learning and inquiry, toward guessing and hunches, toward the possiblity of solving problems on one's own . . . To instil such attitudes by teaching requires something more than the mere representation of fundamental ideas. Just what it takes to bring off such teaching is something on which a great deal of research is needed, but it would seem that an important ingredient is a sense of excitement about discovery--discovery of regularities of previously unrecognized relations and similarities between ideas, with a resulting sense of self confidence in one's abilities.

Using Content from the Structure of Knowledge as an Issue

There are selected educators who recommend that public school pupils achieve structural ideas in diverse units of study in the social studies. These stuctural or content ideas generally are identified by college and university professors in different social science areas such as history, geography, political science, economics, sociology, and anthroplogy. These broad generalizations would then be available to teachers in guiding pupils to attain the structural ideas inductively. The teacher's role in teaching would be to provide learning experiences for pupils utilizing methods of inquiry emphasized by historians, geographers, political scientists, economists, sociologists, and anthropologists.

There would be selected advantages in having pupils achieve structural ideas.

1. Social scientists have attempted to identify important content for pupils to gain.

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[1] Jerome S. Bruner. The Process of Education. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960., page 20.

Reasons given for deemphasizing the use of social studies textbooks in teaching-learning situations include the following:

1. Pupils individually possess diverse learning styles; thus different ways of learning for learners must be implemented.
2. There are selected learners who do not like reading as a major method of learning.
3. Pupils need a variety of learning experiences to develop and/or maintain interest in learning.
4. Content contained in social studies textbooks may not be perceived as relevant by individual pupils.
5. Teachers need to provide for individual differences; manuals and textbooks cannot do this for teachers.

Inductive Versus Deductive Teaching as an Issue

Educators continually debate the merits of inductive versus deductive methods of teaching. There are selected curriculum workers who emphasize strongly the use of inductive approaches in pupil learning. When utilizing inductive approaches in ongoing learning experiences, the teacher must

1. be a good asker of relevant stimulating questions.
2. encourage learners to respond to problem areas.
3. guide learners to express creative content in a relaxed learning environment.
4. assist pupils to develop generalizations.

Advantages given for utilizing inductive methods of teaching include the following:

1. Pupils need to be "on their toes" to respond to identified questions and problems.
2. Learners learn more if they need to discover information.
3. Pupils learn to utilize diverse reference sources in data gathering situations.

Disadvantages given for using inductive methods of teaching may include:

1. the time factor involved in guiding pupils to discover information and content.
2. the teacher's personality not harmonizing with this method of teaching.

3. there are pupils, no doubt, who prefer deductive methods of teaching.

There are selected educators who strongly emphasize the importance of using deductive methods of teaching. Thus, the teacher should

1. present content meaningfully to pupils in a recommended sequence.
2. present information in a clear, concise manner utilizing related audiovisual aids.

There are, of course, numerous advantages which may be listed in using deductive approaches in teaching-learning situations.

1. Time may be saved on the pupil's part in learning when relevant content is presented to learners in explanation form using a variety of learning activities.
2. There are pupils that prefer deductive methods of teaching as compared to inductive approaches.
3. The learning styles of selected learners may harmonize more with deductive as compared to inductive methods of teaching.

Disadvantages may also be listed for utilizing deductive methods of teaching:

1. Pupils may become rather passive in learning if this method of teaching is used excessively.
2. Methods of teaching need to be harmonized with learning syles of individual pupils.

Thus, in resolving the inductive versus deductive controversy in teaching and learning, it appears that

1. methods of teaching need to be selected which guide pupils in attaining relevant learnings.
2. learning experiences selected must help each pupil develop to his/her optimum.
3. effective appraisal procedures must be utilized to measure pupil gains in learning.

2. Pupils learn to think and use methods of inquiry as recommended by involved social scientists.
3. Teachers receive assistance in deciding upon relevant content for learners to achieve.

There also are disadvantages in emphasizing pupils' achieving stuctural ideas.

1. The ideas may not be perceived as being significant content by learners.
2. It is difficult for teachers to know specific methods of inquiry used by social scientists.
3. Pupils also have questions and problems which they wish to solve.
4. The teacher may feel there is more important content for learners to gain in problem solving situations.
5. Learners may not develop desirable attitudes toward learning if content is predetermined prior to sessions devoted to teaching social studies.

Using Affective Objectives as an Issue

There are selected educators who strongly recommend using affective objectives as a basis for instructing pupils in teaching-learning situations. The following criteria then become important to follow in ongoing units of study in the social studies:

1. Pupils should be involved in selecting what to learn as well as in selecting desired learning experiences.
2. Learners must be given ample opportunities to make decisions pertaining to selecting objectives, learning activities, and means of appraisal in diverse units of study.
3. Mutual trust and respect are improtant between and among teachers and pupils.
4. Learners should be guided in developing an adequate self-concept.
5. Learning experiences for pupils should be interesting.
6. Pupils may do much of their own pacing in ongoing learning activities.
7. Developing wholesome attitudes within pupils is a very important outcome in learning.
8. A humane environment fosters better total growth of learners.

Disadvantages given for using affective approaches in teaching-learning situations include the following:

1. Pupils learn more if attitudes are positive in the class setting.
2. The concept of humaneness is important to emphasize in a democracy.
3. Positive attitudes on the part of pupils guide in achieving well in terms of understandings and skills objectives.
4. Life in society places heavy emphasis upon individuals making decisions; thus learners in the class setting should be involved, with teacher guidance, in selecting objectives, learning activities, and evaluation procedures.

Disadvantages which may be listed for implementing generalizations pertaining to affective education include the following:

1. Selected learners may lack maturity in selecting what to learn as well as the means of learning.
2. The professionally prepared teacher should be in an excellent position to select objectives, learning experiences, and appraisal techniques.
3. The basics, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, may be minimized when affective learnings are heavily emphasized in the school and class setting.
4. The affective curriculum does not meet the needs as well as learning styles of selected pupils.
5. It is difficult for the teacher to appraise each child's affective achievement adequately when individual learner gains are to be noticed specifically.

Pertaining to affective objectives, Dobkin, Fischer, Ludwing and Koblingner[2] wrote:

> The affective domain. . . is concerned with the development and clarification of attitudes and values. While the public school curriculum has always dealt, at least indirectly, with this area, recently there has been a growing realization that achievement of all cognitive objectives requires the parallel, concomitant achievement of affective objectives. For example, putting a book or a teacher in front of a pupil will not result in the desired cognitive gains

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[2] William S. Dobkin, Joel Fischer, Bernard Ludwig, and Richard Koblinger. A Handbook for the Teaching of Social Studies. Second Edition, Newton Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1985, page 4.

unless the pupil is aware of the book or the teacher and absorbs what is presented. What this means for the educational experience is that "teaching" does not necessarily result in learning. Certain attitudes and/or values must be present if the student is actually to learn something. Conversely, attitudes and/or values devoid of substantive backing are ill-founded and immensely changeable. In sum, the cognitive and affective domains are interdependent and follow a parallel hierarchy.

Using Workbooks as an Issue

There are social studies teachers who believe strongly in the heavy use of workbooks in ongoing units of study. These teachers may guide pupils to complete learning experiences in each sequential page in the involved workbook. Perhaps, parents of these children, as a whole, also wish each sequential page to be completed in the workbook by learners. There are selected questions which need to be answered pertaining to pupils in a class completing learning experiences within the confines of a workbook.

1. Does each learner in a class need to complete the contents of each page in a reputable workbook sequentially?
2. Are pupils gaining relevant learning by completing exercises contained in the adopted workbook?
3. Does learning become boring for pupils when heavy emphasis is placed upon utilizing workbooks as learning experiences in the social studies curriculum?
4. Do pupils understand major concepts and generalizations well due to completed exercises contained in a workbook?

Using Criterion Referenced Tests as an Issue

Educators who stress the importance of S-R theory of learning may believe in the use of criterion referenced tests to appraise pupil progress. These tests are based on the use of behaviorally stated objectives in teaching-learning situations. Prior to teaching, the teacher determines and writes measurable objectives for pupils to attain. State mandated or district-wide instructional management systems of instruction also emphasize

the use of behaviorally stated objectives. Pretesting of learners is completed to determine present achievement levels of each pupil. After appropriate learning activities have been provided for pupils to achieve realistic measurable objectives, the teacher measures if desired ends have been acquired. The measurable objectives become the criteria against which pupil achievement is gauged.

Reasons given for advocating the use of criterion referenced tests to appraise pupil achievement may be the following:

1. It is an unbiased approach to evaluate learner progress. The objectives for pupils to attain are written down and it is measurable or ascertainable if learners have or have not attained these desired ends.
2. Interested, responsible persons such as parents, administrators, and supervisors may be shown objectively an individual pupil's progress in terms of achieving stated objectives.
3. The teacher may appraise his/her effectiveness in teaching by noting learner progress in attaining measurable objectives.

Disadvantages which may be given when criterion referenced tests are used include the following:

1. These tests may not measure relevant learnings of pupils such as developing significant attitudes.
2. The teacher alone prior to teaching may not be able to determine what pupils are to learn. Pupils also have questions and problems they wish to identify and attempt to solve in units of study.
3. A variety of procedures needs to be utilized to appraise achievement. Thus, diverse procedures to evaluate achievement need to be used to appraise all facets of a pupil's dvelopments such as intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development.

Using Programmed Materials

Programmed materials are written by a programmer or programmers. Thus, programmers determine objectives for pupils to attain, learning experiences to achieve these ends, and methods of appraising progress.

Selected programmed materials may contain the following sequence which learners need to follow:

1. Read a sentence or a short paragraph.
2. View a related illustration, if one exists.
3. Respond to an item to appraise progress, such as a completion item.
4. Check the response in the completion test item by comparing the written response given by the pupil with that of the programmer.
5. Correct responses given by the pupil reinforce what has been learned.
6. The pupil who responded incorrectly now knows the correct response as provided by the programmer.

The above named sequence may be repeated again and again with pupils making few errors in responding to quality field tested materials.

Advantages given for utilizing programmed materials include the following:

1. Pupils generally are successful in each sequential step of learning.
2. Favorable attitudes may be developed within learners if success is inherent in learning.
3. Pupils individually may work at their own optimal rate of learning. An individual pupil does not need to adjust speed of learning to peers in the class setting.
4. Reputable programmed materials generally have been tested thoroughly in pilot situations, thus eliminating sequential weaknesses.

Disadvantages which can be listed for using programmed materials include the following:

1. Exclusive use of programmed materials may become very monotonous to selected learners.
2. Programmed instruction may not harmonize with the learning styles of specific pupils.
3. The sequential steps in learning may be too small for talented and gifted pupils.
4. Pupils generally have no opportunities to identify and attempt to solve problem areas.

Process Versus Product in Learning

Which is more important in ongoing learning experiences in the class setting--the process involved, or the final product in learning? Processes are more complex to measure in terms of learner achievement as compared to products.

The following may be considered to be processes in teaching-learning situations: critical thinking, creative thinking, valuing, problem solving, making choices and decisions, evaluating, hypothesizing, gathering data from diverse reference sources, and developing positive attitudes. It is complex to measure how well pupils have achieved in each of these processes.

The following products may be valuable for pupils to acquire: attained facts, concepts, and generalizations; art work; construction projects; written products; recordings of the spoken voice; and video taped presentations. Through teacher observation, it can be determined to some extent how well learners are doing in the previously named products.

The following questions, no doubt, need to be answered pertaining to issues involving process versus product outcomes in learning:

1. What balance in the curriculum should be in evidence between emphasizing processes as compared to products in learning?
2. What kinds of learnings are needed by pupils in order to become fully functioning members in society?
3. Who should be involved in determining appropriate balance between process as compared to products objectives in ongoing learning activities?
4. What kinds of learning experiences should be provided for pupils in emphasizing the importance of process and products objectives?

5. Which appraisal techniques should be utilized in evaluating pupil progress in process and products objectives?
6. Can pupil learning be sequenced appropriately in attaining both process and products objectives? Why or why not?

Pertaining to process skills, Gega[3] wrote:

> In observing, pupils learn to use all of their senses, note similarities and differences in objects, and be aware of change.
>
> In classifying, pupils group things by properties or functions; they may also arrange them in order of value.
>
> Measuring teaches them to use nonstandard and standard units to find or estimate quantity. Measurement skills may often be applied in combination with other skills introduced in the mathematics program.
>
> Communicating teaches pupils to put observed information into some clear form that another person can understand.
>
> In inferring, they interpret or draw a conclusion from what they observe. When pupils infer from data that something will happen or has happened, usually the term predicting is used. When people state an inference they want to test, usually the term hypothesizing is used. So predicting and hypothesizing are special forms of inferring.
>
> In experimenting, we often guide pupils to state their hypotheses as operational (testable) questions and help them to control variables with their understanding.

Selecting Objectives as an Issue

Who should choose objectives for pupils to attain in ongoing units of study? There are selected educators who strongly recommend that pupils should be heavily involved in selecting what to learn (objectives) as well as the means of learning (experiences and activities). Other educators feel that the teacher, the school district, or the state should select goals for learners to achieve.

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[3] Peter C. Gega. Science in Elementary Education. Sixth Edition, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990, pp. 96 and 97.

Advantages given for pupils to be strongly involved in determining objectives include the following:

1. Pupils must perceive objectives as being truly relevant; otherwise optimal achievement will not occur.
2. Democratic living stresses pupil involvement in detemining what is to be learned.
3. Learners perceive reasons for developing selected understandings, skills, and attitudes once they are involved in decision making situations.
4. Life in society consists of making choices in terms of wants, needs, and available resources.
5. A more adequate self-concept may be attained by a pupil who has opportunities to choose and make selections.

Avantages given for the teacher to choose objectives for pupils to acquire include the following:

1. The teacher has been trained and educated in the teaching profession and is thus better able to select what learners are to learn.
2. The teacher can select objectives based on pupils' interests and puposes by noticing comments and statements made by the latter.
3. The teacher can more objectively diagnose learning deficiencies.

No doubt, a middle ground can be found pertaining to the controversy of the teacher versus the learner selecting objectives for the latter to attain. Through teacher-pupil planning goals for learners, in many cases, may be selected which the latter perceive to be relevant and satisfying.

Pertaining to the selection of objectives, Noll[4] wrote:

> Down through history organized educational experiences

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[4] James Wm. Noll. Taking Sides, Clashing Views on Controversial Educational Issues. Fourth Edition, Guilford, Connecticut: The Dushkin Publishing Company, 1987, pp. 14 and 15.

have served many purposes--the transmsission of tradition, knowledge, and skills; the acculturation and socializiation of the young: the building and preserving of political-economic systems; the provision of opportunity for social mobility; the enchancement of the quality of life; and the cultivation of individual potential, among others. At any given time, the schools pursue a number of such goals, but the elucidation of a primary or over-riding goal which gives focus to all others has been a source of continuous contention.

Particularly in the last hundred years, during which schooling in America has been expanded to vast numbers of young people, has the argument over aims gained momentum. By the turn of the century, John Dewey was raising serious questions about the efficacy of the preveiling approach to schooling. He believed that schooling was often arid and pedantic, detached from the real lives of children and youth. In establishing his laboratory school at the University of Chicago, Dewey hoped to demonstrate that experiences provided by schools could be meaningful extensions of the normal social activities of learners, having as their primary aim the full experiental growth of the individual.

In order to accomplish this, Dewey sought to bring the learner into the active and intimate relationship to the subject matter. The problem-solving or inquiry approach which he and his colleagues at Columbia University devised became the cornerstone of the "new education"--the progressive education movement.

By 1938, Dewey himself . . . sounded a note of caution to progressive educators who may have abandoned too completely the traditional disciplines in their attempt to link schooling with the needs and interests of the learners. Having spawned an educational revolution, Dewey, in his later years, emerges as more of a compromiser.

In that same year of 1938, William C. Bagley, in "An Essentialists' Platform for the Advancement of American Education," harshly criticized what he felt were anti-intellectual excesses promulgated by progressivism. In the 1950s and 1960s this theme was elaborated on by others who demanded a return of intellectual discipline, higher standards, and moral guidance, among them Robert M. Hutchins, Adm. Hyman Richkover, Arthur Bestor, and Max Rafferty.

Career Education as an Issue

Career education has received considerable emphasis in educational literature. Reasons given for emphasizing units on career education in the social studes include the following:

1. Careers exist in society; thus school and society become more integrated entities when units of study on career education become an inherent part of the school curriculum.
2. Eventually, all pupils presently in our elementary schools must choose a career. Certainly, the public schools may make a major contribution to this important end.
3. Careers are a persistent situation in life. Careers are important now as well as in future times.
4. Skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and observing may be stressed in ongoing units of study involving career education.

Disadvantages which may be given pertaining to including units on career education in the schools may be the following:

1. The elementary social studies curriculum is already crowded with other major units of study needed by pupils.
2. It is difficult to determine which careers should be emphasized in ongoing units of study since "change" is a key concept in American society.
3. It is too early to emphasize career education on the elementary school level of instruction. There are more basic learnings for pupils of these age levels, such as proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The Basics in the Curriculum

There are selected lay people and educators who recommend a return to heavy emphasis upon the basics in the curriculum, namely reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is felt by many in American society that pupils are not learning to read and write well, as well as reveal adequate proficiency in the area of computation. Employers have felt that employees lack necessary skills in the three R's--reading, writing, and arithmetic. High values in society are placed upon individuals demonstrating competence in these basics in the school curriculum and in the curriculum of life. Thus, the skills of the three R's are deemed as being relevant and significant in all occupations, vocations, and professions in American society.

Advantages given for stressing the basics in the school curriculum may well include the following:

1. To function well in society, individuals must be able to read, write, and compute at a desired level of competency. Thus, the three R's need adequate consideration within the framework of a basics curriculum.
2. Each of the three R's should receive appropriate emphasis in the basics in the curriculum approach. Thus, adequate time would be available to truly have pupils achieve well in reading, writing, and arithmetic.
3. Teachers may have adequate opportunities to develop pupil proficiency in the three R's. Too many separate curriculum areas emphasized in teaching-learning situations may decrease depth achievement possibilities among pupils.

Disadvantages which might be listed for a three R's emphasis in the curriculum include the following:

1. The scope of the curriculum may be extremely narrow with a three R's focus.
2. It has never been determined which curriculum areas, specifically might be labeled as basics in addition to the three R's.
3. Content needing emphasis within the three R's framework must also be indentified. Vagueness exists in terms of which objectives need emphasizing within the three R's currriculum.
4. Significant objectives have never been agreed upon in terms of ends learners need to acquire to become fully functioning individuals in society.

Learning Centers as an Issue

There are selected educators who emphasize the utilization of learning centers as being an effective means of guiding pupils to achieve optimal development in the social studies. Thus, through teacher-pupil planning, diverse centers may be in evidence in the class setting. As an example pertaining to any social studies unit, the following stations may be developed in the class setting:

1. an art center
2. a history center

3. a sociology-anthropology center
4. a reading center
5. a dramatization center
6. a music center
7. a geography center
8. a political science center
9. an economics center
10. a construction center

Each of these centers may be labeled attractively to orient the learner to its possible contents. A task card may be placed at each center to guide pupils in the selection of learning activities. Thus, a learner may choose a center, as well as a specific learning activity to participate in. The teacher serves as a guide and stimulator to motivate pupil achievement and learning. Centers in the class setting should contain concrete, semi-concrete, and abstract learning experiences for pupils. The tasks written or typed on task cards must provide adequately for pupils on diverse levels of achievement. The tasks may also be presented in oral discussion form.

Advantages given for emphasizing the utilization of learning centers in the school-class setting include the following:

1. Pupils learn more if ample opportunities exist to be actively involved in planning and selecting learning activities and experiences.
2. Positive attitudes may be developed within learners if decision-making is emphasized on their part within the framework of teaching-learning situations.
3. Social development is stressed adequately in learning centers philosophy; learners have ample opportunities to work together with others on projects and activities.
4. Learners also have adequate opportunities to work on tasks on an individual basis.

Disadvantages given in having pupils participate in learning centers include the following:

1. Pupils are not mature enough to participate in choosing objectives and learning activities in the school-class setting.
2. Selected learners may not achieve well unless supervised carefully by a teacher or teachers.
3. The basics--reading, writing, and arithmetic--may be minimized when utilizing centers in teaching-learning situations.
4. The utilization of learning centers may not harmonize with the learning styles of selected pupils.

In Summary

Teachers, principals, and supervisors need to study, analyze, and appraise relevant issues in the social studies curriculum. Ultimately, based on knowledge, selected trends in the social studies curriculum need implementation.

Pertaining to a quality classroom environment, Moore[5] wrote:

> Central to effective management is classroom leadership and the ability to establish a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to learning. As an effective leader, you must be concerned with your ability to provide a positive social, physical, and intellectual environment which, in turn, requires that you possess the ability to communicate effectively and to motivate students.
>
> Another highly important aspect of classroom management is the matter of discipline, which perennially appears as a major concern on surveys of teachers, parents, and administrators. Discipline should not be equated with punishment. Whereas punishment is the reaction to disruptive behavior, discipline is concerned with the prevention of disruptive behavior as well as reactions to it. Therefore, discipline is concerned with what you do to prevent behavior problems as well as what you do when problems occur. As a teacher, you should be skilled in both the prevention and reaction aspects of discipline.

Problems for Consideration and Discussion

1. Survey recent literature in the education arena and locate relevant issues described by writers in journals and teacher education texts in the teaching of social studies. What are the pros and cons pertaining to each of these issues?

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[5] Kenneth D. Moore, Classroom Teaching Skills, A Primer. First Edition, Random House, 1989, p. 196.

2. Which criteria may be utilized to appraise an identified issue in the social studies curriculum?
3. Why, in your own thinking, do issues exist in the teaching of social studies?
4. Develop a lesson plan pertaining to the teaching of social studies utilizing both inductive and deductive methods of teaching and learning.

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